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I took this opportunity to listen to them, to their concerns and their hopes, their fears and their dreams about the future and what the future might hold for them and their families, for their communities, their farms, their businesses, and for our great state. This insight and, hopefully, understanding, gathered in coffee shops and parades, in public appearances and pancake feeds, was a major factor in shaping my vision for the state's future and I have to tell you it's the foundation for my priorities as your Governor. While Nebraska is, of course, a diverse state in terms of the size of our communities, our ethnic heritage, our religion, our occupation and the interests of our citizens, I was struck time and time again over the past three years about the many things that Nebraskans share, what I would refer to as our core values, our beliefs, our goals, those that bring us together despite our differences. It is those common values that define the context within which the priorities for my administration have been formed. Let me just take a moment and talk about those values. First, Nebraskans have a great pride in the heritage of this state. Nebraskans are strong people. They're independent, they're hard working, whose ancestors endured hardships to settle here, to establish their communities and to raise their families. Secondly, Nebraskans believe in the value of education. Nebraskans care very deeply about their communities and their schools and they understand the significant role that all pieces of our educational system--K through 12, higher ed, job training and distance learning--play in our state's quality of life, its economic vitality and our children's future. Third, they have tremendous respect for our natural resources. They understand how blessed we are as a state to have an abundant water supply, clean air, fertile soil and, of course, just the sheer physical beauty of the state of Nebraska. While much of our economy is dependent on these resources, our citizens understand that there must be a balance between using them for our benefit today and preserving them for future generations. Fourth, Nebraskans care about managing finances. Nebraskans are thrifty people. They are cautious people when it comes to money, whether it's in managing their family budget, managing their business or a farm, and of course they expect that government will be thrifty and cautious in managing their precious tax dollars. Fifth, Nebraskans have a basic optimism for the future. They're positive in their outlook. They're optimistic, but it's also